

'Mental health monitor plan dangerous'

L. F. Palmer Jr. last week reported that the Joint Commission on the Mental Health of Children has proposed "a universal monitoring system" with "centralized data banks" which would collect information on all children and their families and "monitor" their development.

The supposed aim of this dangerous scheme is to attack "mental illness" in children. The plan neglects the fact that there is no one universal standard of what constitutes "mental health."

Any attempt by a government commission to universally eliminate mental "illness" in children will, in effect, be an attempt to eliminate those kinds of personalities that the government does not approve.

For instance, the commission would almost certainly want to eliminate, or at least lessen, aggressive tendencies. But aggressive tendencies may lead in other directions than crime.

Aggressiveness probably is an essential prerequisite for vigorous, determined political dissent. Thus the elimination of aggressiveness could mean the end of democracy as we know it.

The commission's scheme would be a major step toward universal compulsory behavioral engineering. As this behavioral engineering grows more and more extensive and effective, people would become, to all intents and purposes, mere robots, designed and built to serve specific purposes, like automobiles or adding machines. The essential human characteristics of unpredictability and uncontrollability would disappear.

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